

illustrated with a portrait. Says the author, very truly, "Alexander Wilson will always hold a distinctive place as the pioneer worker in American ornithology. Audubon was the artist, the gifted painter of our bird life. Both of these men were poet and artist rather than scientist. It was Charles Lucien Bonaparte who first placed American ornithology on the firm basis of science." Mr. Cornelius Weygandt writes of the 'Summer Birds of Broadhead's Creek, Munroe Co., Pa.'; Mr. Richard F. Miller on the 'Breeding of the Florida Gallinule (*Gallinula galeata*) in Philadelphia County'; Mr. Sandford Omensetter on 'The Media Grackle Roost' (with a half-tone plate); Mr. C. J. Peck on 'The Overbrook Grackle Roost'; Mr. Witmer Stone on 'June Birds of Fulton County, Pa.'; Mr. E. Semour Woodruff on 'Summer Birds of Milford, Pike County, Pa.'; and a 'Report on the Spring Migration of 1905,' is compiled by Mr. Witmer Stone. The 'Abstract of Proceedings,' eight pages, is followed by a 'Bibliography for 1905' of the ornithological papers by the various members of the Club, wherever published; by 'Bird Club Notes,' a list of the officers and members, and the index. The officers for 1906 are: Spencer Trotter, M. D., President; William A. Shryock, Vice-President; Herbert L. Coggins, Secretary; Stewardson Brown, Treasurer.—J. A. A.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Professor Clark on 'The Feather Tracts of Swifts and Hummingbirds.'

TO THE EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':—

Dear Sirs:—Recently I have read with pleasure the contribution of Professor Hubert Lyman Clark to the above subject, and which appeared in the last issue of 'The Auk' (Jan., 1906, pp. 68-91). It is not my intention to present here anything which may be considered at all in the light of a full review of this article, but I do desire to point out a few of the slips Professor Clark has again been guilty of in quoting my own writings in the same field. I say again, because he seems to be particularly unfortunate in the construction he places upon my words and statements as they appear in an article I printed a good many years ago in the Journal of the Linnæan Society of London (1888) on my 'Studies of the Macrochires,' etc. The nature of these slips I undertook, and I think very successfully, to point out in 'The Condor' some time since (Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 47).

Professor Clark in his article in 'The Auk' takes great pains to make it clear to his readers when I wrote my Linnæan article on the 'Macrochires'

that in my account of the pteryloses of the swifts and hummingbirds, I made use only of "Nitzsch's figures, which are, unfortunately very inaccurate" (p. 69), and, further, that the "position" I assume "is clearly based on insufficient or unreliable evidence." Both of these statements or insinuations are utterly without foundation. In common with most writers on pterylography, I make constant reference to Nitzsch's figures, but in nearly every instance in a critical way, pointing out his deficient comparisons, oversights, and lack of elaboration of the subject. In so far as the swifts and hummingbirds go, I had ten times, or more, the amount of material before me, illustrating those two groups, that Nitzsch had when he wrote his 'Pterylographie,' and I hardly think that any one will ever charge me with not having used "the evidence." A *partial* list of my material is presented in my Linnæan article, and I have examined scores of other specimens not enumerated there. That list includes a varying number of individuals of two species of trogons; three genera of the Caprimulgidae; various swifts, and a great many hummingbirds; and, finally, all the forms of our swallows known at the time, and two species of *Ampelis* for comparison. So far as the hummingbirds and swifts are concerned I place more reliance upon what is to be found in the cases of *freshly killed* specimens, than I do upon many alcoholics, for the reason that it too often happens in the case of the latter, that they are specimens left over that the field collector did not have the time to skin, and in a day or two throws them into alcohol. Now with the tropical hummingbirds and many other forms, this means that the early stages of dermal decomposition has set in and the feathers on the gular area, the abdomen, and elsewhere will come out and be lost. This I have had happen in the case of some swifts I collected in New Mexico, and often in the hummingbirds.

When he comes to discuss the feather tracts of the Cypseli (p. 70), Professor Clark states that "On the anterior part of the neck, close to the head, is a large and very evident apterium, one of the most characteristic features of the pterylosis." He states that I "positively" deny "the existence of this apterium in the swifts," and I would like to ask my critic where I make any such denial. The locality referred to, being on the *anterior* part of the neck in a short-necked bird like a swift can be nothing less than the gula (or the gular area or region), and I fail to find any special reference to it in my writings anywhere. What I did deny was the presence of the *nuchal apterium* in the swifts and swallows, but recognized its presence in the hummingbirds. It is certainly absent in the swallows, and personally I have never met with it in the case of a swift; but then I have only examined some forty or fifty of them for the purpose (*Chatura*, *Cypseloides*, *Cypselus*, and *Aëronautes*).

Professor Clark further states that I deny the presence of the "supra-ocular apteria" in the swifts (p. 90), whereas I do nothing of the kind, but simply invite attention to the fact that Nitzsch figures them for *Cypselus*, and as I did not dispute his recognition of their existence, it is fair to presume that I recognized the presence of those apteria in the *Cypseli* generally. The fact of the matter is, twenty years ago I believed that

pterylographers the world round knew of those little naked places over the tops of the eyes in swifts. Personally, I have yet to find a hummingbird wherein the skin covering the pinion is *black*, and as this communication goes to press, I have examined an excellent specimen of *Trochilus colubris*, and it possesses no such character. Everyone knows, who knows anything of the subject at all, that it is present in swifts.

R. W. SHUFELDT.

6th January, 1906.

A Suggestion.

TO THE EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':—

Dear Sirs:—During the revision of the A. O. U. Check-List I trust that the common names will not be entirely neglected. Most of the names in the last edition are well chosen and have stood the test of time, but a few appear to be either inappropriate or else a trifle bookish. As an example of a 'bookish' name the word "partridge" may be cited. Neither ornithologists or sportsmen employ this word in the A. O. U. sense. In speaking of species of *Oreortyx*, *Lophortyx*, *Callipepla*, and *Cyrtonyx*, they, of course, use "quail." Our western members may not know that *Bonasa* is commonly called "partridge" from New England to Pennsylvania, while the same name is applied to *Colinus* in the South. Hence we have a curious confusion of terms. I wish to propose that "quail" be substituted for "partridge" in the next check-list. I have heard the objection raised that these birds are not true quail, but as they are not true *partridges*, this fact may be cheerfully overlooked.

Names which can be improved upon are such as Louisiana Tanager, Arkansas Kingbird, Arkansas Goldfinch, and possibly a few others with inappropriate geographical handles. Western Tanager has been in literature for fifteen years and is a better name. I leave the others to the tender mercies of a committee.

In California the Mountain Quail of nearly all sportsmen and bird men is *Oreortyx pictus plumiferus*, called Plumed Partridge in the Check-List. Why not change things about and call *pictus*, Harlequin or Painted Quail, and place Mountain Quail where it belongs? Geographical names are becoming more popular (and are more useful) than personal names. Hence we now frequently see Sierra Junco, instead of Thurber Junco. This commendable practice could be extended advantageously. Mr. Grinnell in describing *Parus rufescens barlowi* had to rename *neglectus*, which he called Marin Chickadee. Mr. Ridgway has unfortunately discarded this for Nicasio Chickadee—unfortunately, because Nicasio is only a very little town that is not likely to last a great while, whereas Marin County, California, covers most of the range of *neglectus*. There are other slight changes, "mere details" perhaps, but wise men tell us that only through attention to details shall we arrive at perfection.

My idea has been to make the suggestion rather than to furnish specific cases for its application.

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